

DD/A Registry

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: William N. Hart
Acting Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Systematic Review for Declassification

DD/A REGISTRY

FILE: security-4-1

STAT

1. Based on a discussion with [] I am forwarding a short paper which describes another program we have had to adopt which eats up valuable resources and produces minor results. This program, called Systematic Declassification Review and mandated by Executive Order 12065, requires us to review all permanent records when they reach 20 years of age to determine whether they can be declassified and released to the public.

2. After 3 years of experience, we find we are unable, without tripling our effort, to accomplish the task. The Government Accounting Office has reviewed the program and has recommended it be abolished. We agree.

3. It is recommended that the Agency take whatever action is necessary to obtain an exemption from this requirement. Since it is mandated by an Executive order, the new administration can resolve the problem rather quickly if it so desires.

/s/ William N. Hart

William N. Hart

Attachment

MORI/CDF

SUBJECT: Systematic Review for Declassification

DDA/DIS/THWhite:ydc x3116 (5 Feb 81)

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4 February 1981

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FOR DECLASSIFICATION

SYNOPSIS:

The Program of Systematic Review for Declassification mandated by Executive Order 12065 has proven costly and unproductive. It syphons off valuable and scarce resources from CIA's primary mission, poses security risks, and bears a product of little value. After a study of the program in 1980, the General Accounting Office recommended that it in effect be abolished. We wholeheartedly agree.

BACKGROUND:

Executive Order 12065, which became effective on 1 December 1978, established the requirement to review all permanent records when they reach 20 years of age (30 years for foreign government information) to determine whether they should remain classified. Those that require continued protection must then be re-reviewed in ten years -- or 30 years if one of several waivers apply -- and every ten years thereafter until they can be declassified. The previous order requiring systematic review, E.O. 11652, signed by President Nixon in 1972, required the initial review of all records when they reach 30 years of age, and the time interval for re-review was left to the determination of department heads. Recognizing the difficulties that would be caused by the compression of the initial review period from 30 to 20 years, E.O. 12065 allows agencies a ten-year "transitional period" to bring their review up to date. Thus, by 1 December 1988, all permanent records dated before 1 December 1968 are to receive their initial classification review.

CURRENT STATUS:

Our best estimate is that the Agency holds approximately 22,000 cubic feet of permanent records to be reviewed by 1 December 1988. We have assigned 40 people to perform this review. Because of the sensitive nature of our records, we must use mostly senior analysts with long years of intelligence experience, supported by a cadre of intelligence assistants and clericals. These analysts are highly trained in their jobs and utilize procedures designed to maximize production as well as to protect Agency equities. In spite of this allocation of resources, which is generous compared to that which many other government agencies have applied, we have been able to review an average of

only 700 cubic feet of permanent records per year. Thus, by 1 December 1988 we will accomplish about one-third of our objective unless we increase the manpower resources assigned to the task by the order of 200 percent. Further, by December 1988 the records already reviewed which retained their classification (about 85 percent) will be ready for re-review. Added to this in December 1988 will be the records that will begin maturing from that year on. In sum, it is nigh an impossible task.

CURRENT PROBLEMS:

CIA's program for systematic review of classified material is, and will continue to be highly problematical. Financial costs will run [] by STAT 1988 under our current program, and at this rate we will still not comply with E.O. 12065. (It will take an estimated [] if we are to comply.) STAT Forty people, mostly experienced, senior analysts of scarce talents are occupied full time reviewing 20-year old and older documents under this program. We estimate that triple that number would be required if we are to comply with E.O. 12065. These officers could and should be used in our primary mission to collect and produce intelligence. The result of all this effort is that an average of 15 percent of the material reviewed is declassified. The declassified material that does eventually reach the public will be of little interest. From a security standpoint, given the workload and time pressures, there is always the danger of human error resulting in the release of compromising information. Also, the release of the declassified material adds to the total picture drawn for our adversaries -- a rather revealing picture when supplemented by information released under FOIA, books, investigations, leaks, and the like. As a result, many formerly cooperative and prospective agents and potentially rewarding foreign intelligence contacts have come to believe (whether true or not) that we are unable to keep their relationship secret. By adding systematic review for declassification to the list, we increase that belief because of the probability (again in their perception) of their being identified in documents to be released in 20 years.

RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend that E.O. 12065 be modified to eliminate the requirement for systematic review for declassification (Section 3-4) or, alternatively, to exempt CIA from its provisions.